

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

sent 4/8/82

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Judge Nelson T. Stephens House

AND/OR COMMON

N/A

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

340 North Michigan

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lawrence

N/A VICINITY OF

No. 3, Larry Winn

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Kansas

CODE

20

COUNTY

Douglas

CODE

045

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☐ PUBLIC
☒ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

N/A

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ COMMERCIAL
☐ EDUCATIONAL
☐ ENTERTAINMENT
☐ GOVERNMENT
☐ INDUSTRIAL
☐ MILITARY
☐ MUSEUM
☐ PARK
☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

George and Betty Allen

STREET & NUMBER

340 N. Michigan

CITY, TOWN

Lawrence

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Kansas

66044

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Douglas County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Lawrence

STATE

Kansas

66044

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

1969

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Kansas State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Topeka

STATE
Kansas

66612

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

—EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
—FAIR

—DETERIORATED
—RUINS
—UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

—UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
—MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The (Old) Judge Nelson T. Stephens property is located northwest of Lawrence, Kansas, it encompasses about 3 acres and the nomination boundaries coincide with the legal boundaries. Included in this nomination, then, are the house, barn, and various remains of other outbuildings. The house has retained a high level of integrity and is the focal point of the property. It is an L-shaped two-story brick dwelling with a small addition at the northeast corner and an adjoining carriage house. The main east-west section extends slightly past the south wing on the west end. Both of the main portions of the house have gable roofs.

The front of the house is oriented toward the south and the east. There are two main entrances located at the junction of the two wings sheltered beneath a flat-roofed frame porch. The porch roof is supported by slender columns resting on pedestals. The balustrade which encloses the porch comes to the height of the molding on the pedestals. The balcony atop the porch is enclosed by decorative panels of the same design as those found beneath the roof line. Located in the center of each panel is a raised circle. The main entrance doors consist of two sets of double French doors, one set in the east wall, the other set in the south wall. These doors open into a stair hall. Adjacent to the double doors on the south wall is a single door. There is a corresponding door in the north wall. In the east gable end there is another door with covered steps beside it leading down into the cellar.

The windows in the house are all single four-over-four double-hung sash, with the exception of the tall, narrow paired windows in the south gable end wall.

Foundation walls of the Stephens house are constructed of squared, rock-faced stone. There is a water table of tooled, smooth-cut stone. Above this the brick walls are laid in common bond. The lintels and sills of the first and second story openings are made of smooth-cut stone. In the north basement wall, there are brick arches over the windows.

The most dramatic exterior ornamentation is a cornice composed of a paneled circle frieze with brackets. This is located below the extended eaves and prominent cornice returns of the intersecting gable roof. The roof is covered with green asphalt shingles. There is a chimney in the west gable end wall and two more in the north wall. The carriage house also has a chimney in its west wall.

A one-and-a-half-story gable-roofed addition extends from the northeast corner of the main house. There is no cellar under this section. The technique of brick construction as well as the stone lintel and sill of a window opening

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in the west wall are similiar to that of the rest of the house.

Next to the addition, the two-story carriage house is constructed mostly of brick, but half of the south wall is frame. An arched doorway has been filled by a bank of windows and a door. There is an original door in the east gable end and two in the north wall. Although these openings have smooth-cut stone lintels, generally the carriage house is more simply decorated than the house. The eave is accentuated by a crown molding and a plain boxed cornice.

Many important original features remain inside the Stephens house. Both pairs of doors into the stair hall are made of walnut with etched glass panels. A curved stairway with walnut handrail and fluted balusters lead up to the second floor. The heavy moldings which ornament the baseboard and door and window openings are probably original. Two downstairs rooms on the south and west have marble mantels and fireplaces with ornamental iron grates. Also in these rooms circular plaster ceiling ornaments remain.

There were several outbuildings on the original Stephens farm that were contemporary with the house. It appears that the upper frame portion of the barn has been rebuilt, but the stone first story is original. Remnants of another stone foundation are located near the barn. Traces of a small brick building north of the main house remains. This may have been a smokehouse or kitchen. There was also a well west of this structure.

Alterations

Alterations to the Judge Stephens house have not changed its basic character. The house has been redecorated inside, but many original features remain. A wall was removed from between the two parlors on the west and an arched opening introduced. Hardwood flooring has been laid over most of the original pine floors. The kitchen on the east has been enlarged. Upstairs a partition wall was removed to create a larger bedroom.

On the exterior all masonry walls have been painted white. There is a twentieth century porch with a trellis roof along the west wall of the south wing. Ornamental iron balconies have been added to the windows of the south gable end. The present shutters are not operable; they are bolted to the wall. Three of the four chimney tops have been simplified. The basement has been dug out and a concrete floor poured.

The northeast addition shows several modern changes. The roof framing has been altered to accomodate a dormer on the west. A pair of windows have been set into the north end wall and a steel beam section has been used to replace a stone lintel above the original window in the north wall.

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The north wall of the carriage house has been reinforced by four steel plates extending from ground level to the eave. Cracks in the wall have been repointed.

Taken as a whole, the complex offers a very good idea of the original layout of the farm buildings. Any more restriction boundaries would inhibit what little sense of farmland remains.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES **1800-1899** BUILDER/ARCHITECT **Unknown**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Nelson T. Stephens, a key spokesman for the establishment of a law school at the University of Kansas, built his country home five miles northwest of Lawrence, Kansas, in 1871. A substantial and elegantly decorated residence, the house was carefully sited in relation to the surrounding landscape. The house is a late example of the Villa style. In 1850 A. J. Downing called this building type "the most refined home of America--the home of its most leisurely and educated class of citizens."

Chronology

Judge Nelson T. Stephens was born in New York in 1820. In 1844 he married, and was admitted to the bar soon thereafter. He and his wife Elizabeth had four children. Until 1861 Stephens practiced law and managed some small farms that he had acquired. Events of that year ultimately led to Stephens' visit to Kansas in 1865 and his subsequent decision to stay in that frontier state.

Stephens was a prosperous family man in 1861 when he answered President Lincoln's call for volunteers to preserve the Union. He raised a volunteer company of infantry from his native county and went to war as a captain.

By August of that year, Stephens was exhausted. A surgeon's report which he quoted in a letter to his family just before returning from the front concluded, "I find that this officer is suffering from fever, neuralgia and general prostration resulting from severe service and exposure on the expedition of a detachment of his regiment into Virginia, and in my opinion is unfit for duty." Even after his retirement from active duty, Stephens did not recover his former health. He developed symptoms of tuberculosis and could not renew his practice of law.

Searching for a milder climate, Stephens left New York in 1865 and traveled west to Missouri and Kansas. When he finally bought land near Lawrence in 1866, he intended to devote most of his time to farming. Stephens sent for his family in the summer of 1868. About the same time he made his first appearance in court "on behalf of the taxpayers of Douglas County in the very important and celebrated injunction suit against the county commissioners to restrain the issuance of the \$300,000 of Galveston railroad bonds."

Stephens seemed to benefit from his life in the country. His health improved enough so that in 1870 he joined the law partnership of Thatcher and Banks. He

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was elected judge of the Fourth Judicial District (Douglas, Franklin, and Anderson counties) in 1876 and was reelected in 1880.

Although Stephens had acquired the land for his home by 1867, it appears that the brick house was not built until c. 1871 when a substantial first mortgage was recorded. Several features distinguished the Stephens house as an unusually convenient and tasteful country home. It was constructed of brick, rather than stone or frame--the more common materials for a farmhouse of the period. The plan provided two servants' bedrooms in the main house and two more above the carriage house. Also, the Stephens residence had running water supplied by a gravity flow system.

Other buildings on the farm were part of an integrated operation. There was an icehouse and a smokehouse as well as two large barns for horses, cattle, and pigs. Nelson Stephens also planted an apple orchard near the house.

Besides its architectural significance, the Judge Stephens house is also important because of its association with the founding of the Kansas University Law School. In her recollections of the 1870's, Kate Stephens, the judge's youngest daughter, asserted that the subject of a law department at the new state university in Lawrence was first raised in discussions at the Stephens home. In 1878 when Nelson Stephens was offered the office of dean of the law faculty; however, he refused on the grounds that the office would conflict with his judicial appointment. Less than three months later, on November 6, he did have the honor of giving the formal opening address to the faculty and students of the new department.

When Stephens died in 1884, his ability and qualifications as a judge were praised. An obituary noted that "he merited and won the commendation of the people he was elected to serve."

Only two years after Judge Stephens died, the house and farm were sold out of the family to the first of a succession of owners. The house was somewhat deteriorated when Fred and Lulu Lutz bought the place in 1924. According to an article in the Lawrence Journal-World, the Lutzs remodeled the house, installing hardwood floors, plumbing, and a furnace. A wall between the downstairs parlors was removed to create a large living room and another wall upstairs was removed to enlarge the master bedroom.

The present owners, Mr. and Mrs. George Allen, bought the house in 1949. They have enjoyed the longest tenure of any owner including Judge Stephens and his family.

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The property, then, is significant for several reasons. It was the home of one of Lawrence's leading citizens, the house itself stands as an excellent example of a wealthy land-owner's residence, and the complex retains valuable evidence its early days as an active farm.

THIS STATEMENT REFLECTS CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND IS SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT.

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Articles

"Death of Judge Stephens," Weekly University Courier, December, 1884.

"Rich History for a House Near Turnpike," Lawrence Journal-World,
May 13, 1964.

Books

Andreas, A. T. History of the State of Kansas. (Chicago: A.T. Andreas,
1883), p. 345.

Stephens, Kate. "Judge Nelson Timothy Stephens," Kansas Historical
Collections. Volume 14 (1916), pp. 23-58.

Allen, George V. and Betty S. Summary of Abstract of Title.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(see continuation sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 3 acres USGS Quadrangle Map: East Lawrence

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 30.5 21.0 4.3 1.7 8.4 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION North Michigan Street on the west, the Kansas Turnpike right of way on the north, the east line is 660 feet east of North Michigan Street and the south line is 185 feet south of the Turnpike right of way.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|------------|------|--------|------|
| <u>N/A</u> | | | |
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
| <u>N/A</u> | | | |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Dale Nimz, Program Assistant
Julie A. Wortman, Architectural Historian; Nora Pat Small, Architectural Hist.

ORGANIZATION

Kansas State Historical Society

DATE

1-8-82

STREET & NUMBER

120 West Tenth

TELEPHONE

913.296-3251

CITY OR TOWN

Topeka

STATE

Kansas 66612

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Executive Director, Ks. State Historical Society

DATE

Jan. 8, 1982

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

6962 III SE
(WILLIAMSTOWN)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF
UNIVERSITY
STATE GEOLOGICAL

39°00'

95°15'

OSKALOOSA 20 MI. 39
0.1 MI. TO JUNC. U.S. 59 AND 24
KANSAS CITY (JUNC. U.S. 71) 40 MI.
TONGANOXIE 12 MI.

308000m E.

12°30'

309

0.5 MI. TO U.S. 24 AND 40

4318000m N.

EAST TOPEKA INTERCHANGE 21 MI.
WEST LAWRENCE INTERCHANGE 0.5 MI.

WAKARUSA

Judge Nelson T. Stephens House

Lawrence, Kansas
Douglas County

UTM Reference: 15/305210/4317840

TOPEKA 26 MI.
AKA VIA U.S. 40 6.5 MI.

